

Hansel *et al.*
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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-14 (cancelled).

C1 15. (New) A method for sorting goods by destination address included on a surface thereof, comprising the steps of:

- generating an image of said surface;
- decoding said image with OCR means so as to arrive at an unambiguous portion of said destination address;
- if said portion is not unambiguously decoded,
 - i. transmitting said image to a video coding workstation;
 - ii. manually entering a prespecified and fixed number of alpha/numeric characters following a predetermined coding rule;
 - iii. querying a database via a search based upon said fixed number of keystrokes;
 - iv. obtaining a limited set of database entries, said set limited by said search; and
 - v. transmitting said limited set back to said OCR means; and
- retrying decoding of said image with said OCR means based upon said limited set so as to produce an unambiguously decoded portion.

2 16. (New) The method according to claim 15, wherein if said portion is unambiguously decoded, repeating said above steps for other portions of said destination address until a sorting decision is unambiguously determined.

3 17. (New) The method according to claim 15, wherein said fixed number of keystrokes is a rule based number reflecting local application.

4 18. (New) The method according to claim 15, wherein said number of alpha/numeric characters correspond to a manually read portion of said image.

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~~19~~ (New) The method according to claim ¹~~15~~, wherein said step of manually entering is performed via voice recognition means.

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~~20~~ (New) The method according to claim ¹~~15~~, wherein said step of manually entering is performed via manual entering means.

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~~21~~ (New) The method according to claim ⁶~~20~~, wherein said manual entering means comprises one of a keyboard, mouse, keypad, touch screen, and stylus.

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~~22~~ (New) The method according to claim ¹~~15~~, wherein said step of querying is performed at said workstation.

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~~23~~ (New) The method according to claim ⁸~~22~~, wherein said database is integral with said workstation.

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~~24~~ (New) The method according to claim ⁸~~22~~, wherein said database is remote and functionally associated with said workstation.

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~~25~~ (New) The method according to claim ¹~~15~~, wherein said step of querying is performed by said OCR means.

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~~26~~ (New) The method according to claim ¹¹~~25~~, wherein said database is integral with said OCR means.

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~~27~~ (New) The method according to claim ¹¹~~25~~, wherein said database is remote and functionally associated with said OCR means.

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~~28~~ (New) The method according to claim ¹~~15~~, wherein a controller facilitates communication between said encoder and said OCR means.

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29. (New) The method according to claim 15, wherein said portion comprises one of a country, postal code, county, state, city, street, house number, and addressee name.

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30. (New) The method according to claim 15, wherein said step of transmitting said image to an video coding workstation further comprises the step of displaying said image on a portion of a display means.

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31. (New) The method according to claim 30, further comprising the step of displaying another image on said display means substantially simultaneously with said image.

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32. (New) The method according to claim 15, further comprising the step of verifying if said manually entered alpha/numeric characters correctly reflect said destination address and if said characters do not reflect said destination address rejecting said limited set via said OCR means.

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33. (New) The method according to claim 15, further comprising the step of differentiating between addressor and addressee information as being said destination address at said OCR means.

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34. (New) The method according to claim 15, further comprising the step of using said OCR means to verify if a database entry is said destination address if said limited set comprises said database entry.

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35. (New) The method according to claim 15, further comprising the step of requerying said database for a match of characters in said fixed number of keystrokes and any characters unambiguously decoded in said step of decoding.

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36. (New) The method according to claim 15, wherein said OCR means comprises an OCR process in functional association with OCR software, a database, and a memory.

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37. (New) A system for sorting items, said items comprising a surface having a destination address thereon, said system comprising:
- a. a scanner for producing an image of said surface;
 - b. an OCR processor associated with said scanner and an address directory, said processor comprising means for receiving said image, means for decoding said image and means for determining if said decoding successfully arrived in a set of characters having a match in said address directory, means for receiving rule based characters and for limiting a plurality of database entries based upon said rule based characters, means for redecoding said image and means for determining if said redecoding successfully arrived in a set of characters having a match in said address directory; and
 - c. an image controller associated with said processor and a video encoding station, said controller comprising means for directing said image from said processor to said station when said decoding is unsuccessful, other means for directing said image and a data input from said station to said processor after operator entry of said rule based characters.
38. (New) The system according to claim 37, further comprising another processor associated with said address directory, said another processor comprising means for creating a list of directory entries limited by said data input and means for transmitting said list to said OCR processor.
39. (New) The system according to claim 38, wherein said directory is integral with said station.
40. (New) The system according to claim 38, wherein said OCR is integral with said workstation.

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41. (New) The system according to claim 38, wherein said directory is integral to said OCR processor.
42. (New) The system according to claim 41, wherein said controller further comprises means for directing said list to said station when no match is determined.
43. (New) The system according to claim 42, wherein said station comprises means for receiving input from an encoder, said input comprising an indication of one of said list.
44. (New) The system according to claim 37, further comprising a bar code printer associated with said controller, said printer printing a bar code on said item in response to a command from said controller.
45. (New) The system according to claim 44, wherein said command is made by said controller in response to an unsuccessful decoding.
46. (New) The system according to claim 45, further comprising a bar code reader located downstream from said bar code printer, said bar code reader facilitating retrieval of items stored based on bar codes printed thereon.
47. (New) The system according to claim 37, further comprising a delay loop for delaying sorting of said items.
48. (New) The system according to claim 37, wherein said delay loop is located upstream from said bar code printer.
49. (New) The system according to claim 37, wherein said scanner is a high resolution scanner.

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50. (New) The system according to claim 37, wherein said item is a mail piece.
51. (New) The system according to claim 37, wherein said item comprises one of a flat mail piece, a parcel and a form.
52. (New) The system according to claim 37, further comprising:
- a. a track for transporting a plurality of items past said scanner;
 - b. a feeding device for receiving said items and selectively directing said items to said track; and
 - c. means for retrieving said items from a container and directing said items to said feeding device.
53. (New) The system according to claim 52, wherein said container is a magazine.
54. (New) The system according to claim 37, wherein said station comprises a monitor comprising means for displaying a plurality of images substantially simultaneously to an encoder.
55. (New) The system according to claim 54, wherein said portion comprises initial letters of an address element manually entered into said station.
56. (New) The system according to claim 37, further comprising means for using said OCR means to verify if a database entry is said destination address if said limited set comprises said database entry.
57. (New) The system according to claim 37, further comprising means for requering said database for a match of characters in said fixed number of keystrokes and any characters unambiguously decoded in said step of decoding.

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58. (New) The system according to claim 37, wherein said OCR means comprises an OCR process in functional association with OCR software, a database, and a memory.

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